



East  
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Public Testimony to the Appropriations Subcommittee of Higher Education on Governor's  
Proposed FY 2024-2025 Budget, H.B. 6659  
In support of restoring Connecticut Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) funding

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Melissa Gavarrino and I am the supervisor for secondary science at East Hartford Public Schools. We have worked with the Connecticut Area Health Education Centers and their Youth Health Services Corp (YHSC) for at least the last five years. We have worked specifically with their Youth Health Services Corp (YHSC) in our Health Science pathway. The YHSC program introduces and promotes health careers, encourages academic and civic engagement, and exposed our students to professional career models and college exploration. Each presentation provides relevant learning for our adolescent students to educate them on different topics, such as driving under the influence/distracted driving, vital signs and monitoring equipment, and a college exploration workshop. A career is also highlighted in each meeting, to make students aware of the various careers available to them.

For the past 21 years, the Connecticut AHEC Network has successfully leveraged collaborations and partnerships with key stakeholders with a focus on Connecticut's healthcare workforce. They have been dedicated and committed to reducing and eliminating health disparities by collaborating and creating partnerships with organizations that aim to improve healthcare access nationally and statewide.

Unfortunately, Governor Lamont's budget proposal removes Connecticut Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) direct funding, and along with it hinders their ability to continue supporting communities to thrive. This program has directly benefited our students by giving them exposure to careers, educating them on risks and promoting safety, and exposing them to various career opportunities and certification programs. I ask that you restore the AHEC line in the budget so that they can continue to support healthcare workforce development in the state.

Sincerely,

Melissa Gavarrino  
Supervisor, Secondary Science  
East Hartford Public Schools